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AMILY LIFE UNDER THE COMMUNES

One point of general interest regarding the establishment of communes in China, has been he question of what the influence of this development would be upon family life. It has been reely stated in the West that the Communes would destroy family life. The Communist maga- ine Chinese Youth has had several articles on the subject, the latest being in its January issue. n earlier issue had an article by Che Hsiang-tung, entitled "Family Life in a Communist So- iety", which was reproduced in its entirety in Tien Feng for December 19, 1958. Though the uthor is apparently not a Christian, still the reproduction of the article in a Christian magazine oes give it a Christian endorsement, so that we may suppose that this is now what Chinese hristians are officially accepting.

The author begins by describing the revolution in society that has taken place. "Both in he country and in the city, life has become centralized, eating communized, the aged put in appy institutions, children put in nurseries, household work and young people's education ocialized." This he claims is a necessary prelude to the liberation of women. But in addi- ion, "this development moves a step toward striking down the family as an economic unit, and rees people from a narrow family life, so that there is a new relation of person with person, a elation which is more favorable to the Communist idea."

He recognizes that this radical change may cause some people to feel uneasy. "For several housand years it has been the custom for each family to live by itself, with its own hearth and itchen. And so this sudden change today seems not quite right to some people. They seem to hink that the old family system was sacrosanct, eternal and unchangeable." In order to dis- abuse men's minds of this prejudice, he reviews the Communist theory of social organizations. 'We must understand all forms of social life from the standpoint of historical materialism. amily life is the product of social progress, and its form has changed with the changing con- itions of social life. In early communal society productive strength was very low, and so eople had to take the tribe as the unit for social life and economic production. Afterwards as roductive strength increased, and the principle of division of labor was introduced, this com- nunal system was gradually dissolved, and replaced by private ownership, and so there appeared he family as a social economic unit. In the periods of slavery and feudalism, the family was he productive unit, but when the period of capitalism arrived, productive power was immense- y increased and became socialized, requiring large numbers of wage-laborers. This develop- nent virtually destroyed the function of the family as a social economic unit. However, it till continued as the unit for consumption and for education. But although the family had vari- ous functions in slave, feudalistic and capitalistic society, it still had one element in common, namely, the family founded upon the basis of private ownership was distinguished by inequality of the sexes; the husband was the income producer, and the wife was either put in a subordinate

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position, or dismissed from economic production altogether. Thus in society and in the family she was entirely dependent upon her husband. This was an economic dependence from which she could not escape. But when ownership of the means of production became public, and production became collectivized on a large scale, this old family system became a drag upon economic production." He then goes on to quote Engels and Lenin on behalf of this interpretation.

"To say that family life must not change, means either that one does not understand that the forms of life must conform to the needs of economic production, or that one simply does not take the Communist point of view in regard to social relationships, and this latter may be just the reflection of a nostalgia for the old system. But manifestly, as long as we look back to the old we shall not be able to move forward into the new, the heaven on earth of a Communistic society."

Evidently there is plenty of this "looking back to the old", for he goes on to say: "Some people are concerned lest the collectivization of life will dissolve all family ties, destroy the moral sense, and take away the feeling of responsibility among family members for each other's welfare. This concern is without foundation."

Before entering on this rebuttal in detail he brings the counter charge that it was really in the old society where there was an unsatisfactory family life--among the well-to-do family life was full of dissension and strife, and among the poor there was always hunger and worry. Now all society joins with the individual to see that his children are educated and his aged parents cared for. This brings up the question of living quarters:

"Many people consider the joys of family life to consist in living together, and so are greatly concerned with the question of living quarters. But the question of whether old folks and the children should live in the same house as the working people, is one which must be decided by the requirements of economic production, convenience of living, and the need for training the next generation in Communism. For the children to live in nurseries or schools is necessary for production, for the liberation of women, and also necessary for the education of the next generation. For the old folks to live in the "happy old people's homes" is necessary for the peculiar care which they need, although of course they can continue to live with their children if they wish. If you analyze the nostalgic feeling which some people have for the old family system, you will find that what they want is for the woman to be busy around the house, taking care of the children. This so-called joy of family life sacrifices the liberation of women and requires them to live a miserable existence."

The putting of small children in nurseries and in boarding school kindergartens and primary schools has evidently aroused opposition: "It is true that some people are unwilling to be separated from their children, and even for the sake of their children neglect their work, being afraid that other people will not take good care of them. They consider mother-love to be above all, 'something for which there is no substitute,' and consider their own children to be more precious than other people's children. This is all wrong. Of course everybody, and especially mothers love their own children, but while loving their own children should also be ready to believe that in a society such as ours today, where the level of Communist understanding has been raised so high, other people will treat their children well, and so they do not need to worry about them and thus neglect their work for social reconstruction."

Having thus disposed of the question of the children, the writer takes up the case of the disgruntled husband. He concedes that "There is of course a reason for his feeling unhappy. In the past when he returned home, there was someone there to wait on him, household matters had been taken care of and he could relax. But now both he and his wife have their work, and the household chores must be divided between the two of them, he must do some things he never did before, things which have always been women's work, and that is why he feels, 'My wife isn't mine any more.' That is why he feels unhappy. But that is only a reflection of the idea of male superiority. In this time of great change everything must change, including the idea of male superiority, and the sexes must become equal. Of course to the man accustomed to feeling superior this is a cause of discomfort."

The writer admits that there are some women so backward as not to want to be liberated,

but that simply shows the necessity for education: "We must first liberate our thinking, we must break off from our minds the shackles of corrupt ideas and capitalist legality."

He warns young people against any recrudescence of capitalist thinking. Some young people, he says, "dream of establishing a warm little family, the boy dreams of a beautiful and obedient wife, the girl dreams of a husband with position; they both dream of a comfortable income, so that they may live in gracious ease and bring up their own clever children. Some of them deliberately devote their whole lives to the accomplishment of this purpose. But this concentration on the little family is in fact nothing more than a recrudescence of capitalist thinking."

It is a very selfish view of life, he says, to be concerned only with the welfare of one's own family. Actually a happy family life must be founded upon the basis of abundance and happiness for all. "Communism and the collective life require of us heroic living. To work for Communism and the good of all is high living, to work for oneself and one's own little family is low living. It is not worth while to make this lower interest our purpose in life."

So ends this eloquent plea for a collective family life. Is the picture it presents purely theoretical, or are the communes actually putting it into effect? The news from China indicates that this program is being actively pushed. During September and October last year, 100 primary schools in and around Paoting became boarding schools, 80 primary schools in Lungyuan, Chekiang, did the same, and many other places that could be named. We have not yet seen any report of a boarding school kindergarten, but Hua Ching-ching, a worker in the Wenmiaolu Kindergarten in Shanghai, wrote an article for the Shanghai Wen Hui Pao of October 30, recommending that it be made a boarding school.

The Peking People's Daily for December 16, 1958, had an article on the subject, "Is It Still Necessary to Have a Home in Collective Living?" This was a report of a debate in Chiehhsiuhsien, Shansi. To the question, Do we have a home at all any more?, some in the debate gave the answer, No. Their reasoning was: "Since we do not have to till the land and keep the pot boiling, only the commune is our home. Everybody has two shoulders and one mouth, carrying a roll of bedding and a washbasin. Every day he eats his fill, does what he is told to do, and goes where he is told to go. What home has he after all?" It was agreed that the old type of home had gone, but the majority still insisted that there was a home. "We have a new and democratically united home. After the day's labor is done, the whole family sleeps under the same roof. The family looks after the livelihood needs of all of the members, plans the household spending, brings up and educates the children. Is this not called home?"

Some women pointed out other advantages: "In the small family in the past, the daughters-in-law and the sisters-in-law really had a bad time. Now that we have public mess halls and children's nurseries, the womenfolk are really liberated. Men work and earn money; we do the same. We spend what we have earned and do not have to depend on men for a living. We no longer have to tolerate the bad temper of our parents, and nobody will dare to look down upon us.

When some mothers expressed their dissatisfaction with having their children taken away from them, they were silenced with this argument: "If a cow does not see its calf around, it will certainly low a few times. If the animal reacts in this way, human beings will certainly react in a better way."

Separation of husband and wife in the interests of economic production seems to be the exception rather than the rule, for it does not regularly enter into the discussion. Communist theory would require it where necessary, for example, when the wife has some special skill which can be best made use of at some place away from where her husband is working, but in the majority of families this question would probably not arise.

MISSIONARY NEWS

Mrs. C. H. Plopper, retired missionary of the Disciples Board, formerly of Nanking, died in Fresno, Cal. on March 12. Mrs. Donald Richardson, formerly Southern Presbyterian missionary in Nanking, died in Richmond, Va., on March 6.

CHURCH NEWS

A Soochow news item indicates what some of the manual labor for church workers is like. At five o'clock one morning the 88 church workers from the Soochow district study institute all assembled at the Soochow branch of the Shanghai-Ningpo Railway (Does that mean the Soochow-Kashing crossline?) where reconstruction work was going on. They were assigned ten carts, and told that in an eight-hour day it was expected that 25 cartloads of dirt would be moved. They all determined to beat this minimum, and the lowest amount moved was 29 loads. Strange to say, the Sputnik which took the Red Flag was a cart operated by nine women from Fenghsien. They were adepts at carrying--with them the dirt moved as quickly as a weaver's shuttle. Their record was 36 loads. (This is the report of one day's work, and it is not stated that they went back to work the second day. Presumably they returned to their studies the next day--if they were not too stiff!)

The Shanghai Liberation Daily for November 10, 1958, prints a statement made by ten Protestant leaders, apparently to the Shanghai Municipal Congress. The signers are Y. T. Wu, Bishop Robin Chen (Episcopal), Tso Fu-ju (Little Flock), David Chu (CCC), Huang P'ei-yung (Methodist), Hsieh Yung-ch'in (Independent), Li Shou-pao and Lo Kuan-tsung (YMCA), and Cora Deng and Chen Shan-hsiang (YWCA). They admit that "many Protestant clergymen have not completely discarded their capitalist standpoint," but point out that political study has raised the level of socialist thinking among them. They realize that in the past they have led "an idle and unproductive life," and so now "over 100 church workers have taken part in productive labor." (It is not clear whether this means they have taken a full time manual labor job, or have simply gone out for an occasional day of labor.) They describe the former organization as "the semi-colonial look of the Protestant church", and then add, "We have recently united all the irrationally scattered churches in Shanghai and have held combined services at 23 places." (This is a peculiar way of expressing union. Does it indicate that the denominations still continue?)

Miss Margaret Sinclair in her Survey of the Year 1958 (IRM for January) states that the Little Flock has produced a Chinese edition of Strong's Concordance. Just what this means I am not too clear about, as a concordance is one of the most untranslatable of works.

GENERAL NEWS

Chuchow, Hunan, (about 30 miles south of Changsha) is said by Hsinhua News Agency to have had a population of only 7,000 as recently as ten years ago. It has now become an important railway hub with a population of 250,000, where the Peking-Canton Railway, the Chekiang-Kiangsi Railway and the Hunah-Kweichow Railway link up. It now has a very considerable number of large factories, including one for the manufacture of locomotives.

Kiangsu Province is working on six large-scale waterway projects. The most ambitious is the digging of a canal that will divert the water of the Hwai River to the northern part of the province and out into the Yellow Sea, instead of running south into the Yangtze as at present. In its widest part the canal will be 1.4 kilometers wide. Four of its 18 sluice gates will measure more than 100 meters in length. In one place the water will be carried by underground culverts through the bed of another river. The two other North Kiangsu projects are: A 380 kilometer north-south canal parallel to the seaboard; and an east-west canal parallel to the Yangtze. The two South Kiangsu projects are two canals both parallel to the Yangtze. The sixth project is the widening and deepening of the Grand Canal.

Two bridges across the Yellow River are in process of construction, one at Chengchow, Honan, to replace the present inadequate bridge, and one in Ninghsia, in the Chingtung Gorge, where a generating plant is being constructed with a capacity of 260,000 kilowatts. Work is also proceeding on the railway line that will connect the Tsaidam Oil Basin, in Chinghai, with Lanchow.

Dr. and Mrs. W. E. B. Dubois, leftist Negro leaders, were banqueted in Peking on February 17. It was noted that she, along with Mrs. Paul Robeson, had pulled down the Nationalist flag at the All-African People's Conference in Accra recently. During the evening the two of them sang a duet, "I Aint Going To Study War No More." Among those present, the news item says, were "American friends in Peking." Dr. Dubois celebrated his 91st birthday in Peking.